



Montana State Fire Chiefs Association

Serving those who lead Montana's fire and rescue services

November 22, 2006

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

SUBJ: Docket No. RM-11348

Dear Chairman Martin:

The Montana State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA) provides leadership and services to those persons interested in the preservation of lives, property and the environment. In that capacity the MSFCA is concerned with the sub-adequate spectrum resources available for critical interoperable communications; a concern we share with our peers in the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC).

In Montana, public safety personnel must be prepared to confront natural disasters, wildland fires, and the impact of severe weather as well as everyday emergencies. We must, therefore, have the tools necessary to enable our response, including an interoperable communications system designed to withstand the elements we combat. Simply put, a major incident requires response by multiple agencies and the inability for personnel to readily communicate on a single system has proven to impede critical operations and threaten responder safety.

Considering the current technologies available, both in the realms of voice and data, the nation's communications systems supporting public safety can be greatly improved. We're aware of the many advantages and personal safety enhancements a nationwide, interoperable, wireless, high-speed, broadband network supporting public safety would provide to our profession. For example, access to data from helmet-mounted cameras, heat sensors placed on firefighter gear, downloaded building blueprints, and GPS chips embedded in equipment will help a commander to know where personnel are and to send assistance to them when they are in jeopardy.

For this reason, MSFCA endorses the principles outlined in petition RM-11348 proposing deployment of an advanced, nationwide, wireless broadband network dedicated to public safety communications needs, which will be financed and maintained through a public/private partnership. For this purpose, the MSFCA supports allocation of an additional 30 MHz of spectrum at 700 MHz to public safety and the creation of a Public Safety Broadband Trust (PSBT).

The MSFCA urges the Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to provide for public safety on this critical issue.



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The MSFCA recognizes that Congressional action is required to guarantee that this spectrum is not auctioned for commercial use, but assigned to the Public Safety Broadband Trust to be used for primary, interoperable public safety operations. By this letter, we also urge our Congressional Members and Members-elect to endorse, sponsor and support the pioneering approach to meeting critical public safety communications needs as proposed in petition RM-11348 and to act promptly in support thereof.

Sincerely,

Steve Larson
Montana State Fire Chiefs Association

Copy to: [MT Congressional Delegation]